

### **Grantee Responsibility for Ensuring the Quality of Head Start Services in Community Partnerships**

A review of a Head Start Program must include an evaluation of the quality of all Head Start community based services and partnerships. All of the Performance Standards must be addressed, and reviewers must look at the quality of the overall Head Start experience that Head Start children and families are receiving.

For example: As a reviewer, during a program review you learn through a parent focus group that several mothers must go to work as a result of a state welfare reform mandate. The mothers tell you that they need guidance about where in the community to go for education and employment services. In addition, they say that they need help in connecting with the local employment agency, and that the Head Start program has not helped them in this area. This is confirmed when you interview staff and when you discuss family partnership agreements that are not meeting or addressing individual family needs. In this case, the grantee may not be meeting the Performance Standards in the area of family and community partnerships.

Similarly, if a child is in a community family child care or center-based child care setting as part of a family's Head Start services package, reviewers need to assess the quality of care being provided by **evaluating the grantee in the following ways:**

- 1) Is the grantee **taking ownership and being accountable for the quality** of the Head Start services that are being provided to Head Start families through community child care partnerships?
- 2) Are they demonstrating that in order to meet the Performance Standards they must **take responsibility for the quality of Head Start services wherever they are being provided?**
- 3) **How are they going about taking responsibility?** What processes, procedures, and systems are in place at the grantee level that allow the grantee to assess quality before entering into partnerships; provide training and technical assistance to partners; and evaluate the quality of the partners' services? For example: Do they have a system for assessing the homes and centers before placing children there? Do they have a system for working with parents to help them make informed choices about child care? Do written agreements say that the community providers will meet the performance standards? Does the grantee have staffing patterns that include regular contact with training and technical assistance to the partners? What system is in place to address situations when child care or other community services are not meeting the standards?

**The monitoring approach needs to focus on the grantee's responsibility for implementing the Head Start Standards and other regulations.**

- What is the grantee saying about what they are trying to accomplish in child care partnerships and how they plan to go about it?
- Are they moving toward their goals?
- Is progress being made?

The program review must focus on the grantee's approach, the systems that are in place to ensure quality, and how they are implementing the systems; including ongoing monitoring and self-assessment.